THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) to (d) Indian Oil Corporation had advertised 103 and 39 LPG distributorships in different categories in Bihar and West Bengal respectively two years back. Applications received in response to the advertisement were forwarded to the concerned Dealer Selection Boards. Out of the above LOIs have been issued in 14 cases in Bihar of which 5 LPG distributorships have since been commissioned. As regards West Bengal LOIs have been issued in respect of 12 of which 6 LPG distibutorships have been commissioned. Selection in remaining cases has not been made on account of non-functioning of the Dealer Selection Boards. Dealer Selection Boards have recently been dissolved. It generally takes about 6—12 months for commissioning of dealerships/distributorships form the date of interview.

LPG Agencies in waiting list in Assam

2404. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of PETROLUEM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of applications for LPG agencies in the waiting list at present in Assam;

(b) the number of LPG agencies allotted till date and the number of LPG dealership still to be allotted to the State; and

(c) the necessary steps being taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) to (c) As on 1.10.1999 there were 148 LPG distibutorships in operation in Assam. In addition to the locations pending from previous marketing plans 69 LPG distributorships have been included in the current marketing plan 1996—98. Locations included in the marketing plans are advertised by the oil marketing companies and selection is made through Dealer Selection Boards. Dealer Selection Boards have recently been dissolved. It generally takes about 6—12 months for commissioning of the dealerships/distributorships from the date of interview.

Subsidies to Petroleum Sector

2405. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the total subsidies to the petroleum sector with item-wise break-up;

(b) the reasons for the subsidies; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to reduce the subsidies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) and (b) The Government does not provide any subsidy out of General Budget to the petroleum sector. The subsidy provided for the price administered petroleum products like Kerosene oil (PDS) and Liquified Petroleum Gas (Domestic) is met by cross-subsidisation from other controlled petroleum produce i.e. motor spirit and aviation turbine fuel.

(c) The Government had decided in November, 1997 that subsidy on LPG (Domestic) and PDS kerosene will be reduced in phases to reach the level of 15% and 33.33% of the import parity price by 2000-01 and 2001-02 respectively. As per the decision, the subsidy is to be transferred to the fiscal budget from the year 2002 onwards.

Effect of price hike on petroleum products

2406. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) how many times the price of petrol, diesel and LPG has been increased by Government during the last three years, till date, year-wise and item-wise;

(b) the extent to which it has resulted in pushing up the transport cost of goods and passengers;

(c) the impact of the price hike in petroleum products on the economy of the country; and

(d) what steps Government have taken so far to minimise the hardships of the consumer especially the middle class/weaker sections of the society?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) The details of revision in ex-storage point prices of petrol, diesel and LPG during 1997, 1998 and 1999 are given in the statement (*See* below).

(b) to (d) Under the provisions of Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, State Governments have been vested with the power to fix fares and freight. Besides, transportation of goods by road is mainly in the private sector where market determines the cost of transportation taking into account the cost of fuel. Public